



Transforming Onboarding for Enhanced Efficiency, Improved Adoption, and Increased Retention

Client Overview

ESG's client is a leading provider of advanced analytics and patient management software specifically tailored for SMB health practices. This digital health management platform includes a suite of products designed to streamline operations, enhance patient care, and ultimately drive revenue growth for small practice professionals. However, as the company expanded its product offerings and integrated with multiple third-party vendors, they faced increasing challenges in onboarding new customers effectively, leading to a significant rise in customer churn.

About the Client

- Industry – Digital Health
- Organization Size – 100-500 employees
- Total Revenue - \$10-100MM
- Location – Americas
- Ownership – Private



HIGHLIGHTS

Outcomes / Deliverables:

- Improvement Roadmap and Gap List
- Customer Persona Needs Analysis
- Pilot Project Execution Plan
- Onboarding Customer Journey Map
- Onboarding Data Analysis

Results:

- ▼ Onboarding time reduced by 67%
- ▲ 60% increase in team productivity
- ★ High customer satisfaction maintained
- ★ Scalable and data-driven onboarding engagement model established

The Challenge

By March 2024, the organization recognized a critical issue within their onboarding process, particularly within the SMB (Small and Medium-sized Businesses) segment. The 6-month revenue churn rate had surged from a previously stable 6.7% to an alarming 14.2%. This spike in churn was largely attributed to the complexity of the onboarding process, exacerbated by the bundling of software from multiple vendors, which overwhelmed new customers.

Key pain points included:

- **Complex Onboarding Process:** Customers struggled with the multifaceted nature of the onboarding process, which was both time-consuming and poorly aligned with their expectations.
- **High Operational Costs:** Supporting this cumbersome process required 16 full-time employees (FTEs), which was not sustainable as the company continued to scale.
- **Inconsistent Customer Experience:** The process was disjointed, leading to frustration and confusion among customers, which further contributed to the high churn rates.

This client engaged ESG to overhaul their onboarding process, with a focus on reducing churn, improving operational efficiency, and creating a scalable model for future growth.

Engagement Goals

The primary objectives of the engagement were:

- Reduce the 6-month SMB revenue churn by 7.5%.
- Substantially boost productivity and reduce Time-to-Value.
- Enhance the overall customer experience to foster better retention and satisfaction.
- Establish a data-driven, scalable onboarding model that could support the company's growth ambitions.

Solution Strategy Phase 1: Comprehensive Onboarding Process Assessment and Redesign

Define and Measure

ESG began the engagement by conducting a comprehensive assessment of the digital health management platform's existing onboarding process. This phase involved collecting and analyzing data to establish a baseline for current performance metrics. To do this, ESG created survival and control charts for the SMB customer segment, providing a clear starting point.

The analysis uncovered critical trends and gaps in the process, revealing that many customers were disengaging during onboarding, which resulted in delays and, eventually, cancellations. While the client initially believed that customer disengagement occurred around the six-month mark after purchase, a deeper analysis showed that the drop-off began around the three-month mark.

In response, ESG set out to redefine the onboarding process, focusing on increasing efficiency and aligning it more closely with customer needs.

Customer Interviews and Insights

A cornerstone of ESG's approach was conducting in-depth interviews with both current and former customers. The goal was to uncover the root causes of dissatisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement. The interviews revealed several recurring themes:

Features, Functionality & Technical Issues

- Customers valued the time-saving features of the digital health management platform but were frustrated by the complexity of integrating these tools into their existing workflows. Many expressed a desire for an all-in-one experience where all patient data and tools were seamlessly integrated within a single platform.
- A significant number of customers reported that the software did not function as expected, with frequent downtimes and connectivity issues disrupting their practice operations. Consistency of data across various systems was a major concern, with customers often facing mismatches that required manual reconciliation.

Training Challenges & Access to Support

- Most customers found the onboarding process overwhelming. The sheer volume of information presented during training sessions was difficult to absorb and retain, leaving customers feeling unprepared to fully utilize the software post-onboarding.
- Customers expressed a strong preference for persona-based training that could be tailored to their specific roles (e.g., dentists, hygienists, office managers), which would help them arrange their schedules and make the training more relevant and effective.
- The prolonged training schedules, often stretching over several weeks, delayed customers from fully implementing the software, further contributing to dissatisfaction.
- Access to support was another pain point. Customers frequently reported long response times and difficulty finding relevant information in the knowledge repository, which led to a sense of helplessness and frustration.

Expectations & Communications Alignment

- There was a clear disconnect between the promises made during the sales process and the reality of the software's functionality and integration capabilities. This disconnect led to unmet expectations and, in some cases, customer cancellations or downgrades.
- Customers also noted that they were often unaware of the full timeline and requirements for a seamless transition from the point of sale to software installation. This lack of clarity resulted in delays and confusion during onboarding.

Analyze and Improve

Armed with these insights, ESG entered the analysis phase, focusing on identifying specific changes needed to resolve the issues uncovered during the customer interviews. The primary goal was to streamline the onboarding process, reduce complexity, and better align it with customer needs and expectations. To achieve this, ESG assembled a cross-functional team consisting of sales, onboarding, and training professionals from the client's organization to map out the onboarding journey.

The journey mapping process began with an in-depth examination of the current onboarding experience, outlining every step from the customer's perspective. This detailed analysis captured every interaction, decision point, and potential pain point along the way. Using customer personas, the team was able to identify communication gaps and areas of engagement that were lacking, as well as moments that had a significant impact on the customer's perception of value. With this data, ESG facilitated a collaborative session to define a vision for the future state, focusing on closing gaps and enhancing the "moments that matter." The outcome was a comprehensive roadmap that not only addressed the current challenges but also aligned with the evolving expectations of the customer base.

This roadmap enabled ESG to recommend key changes to improve the experience for both the customers and internal teams.

Key recommendations included:

- Simplifying the onboarding process by reducing the number of touchpoints and focusing on the most critical aspects of the customer journey.

- Transitioning from 1:1 training sessions to a 1: Many webinar format to increase efficiency and reduce the time required for onboarding.
- Improving the clarity and consistency of communications throughout the onboarding process to ensure customers were fully informed and aligned with the timeline and expectations.

Solution Strategy Phase 2: Pilot Implementation and Optimization

Onboarding Pilot Design

ESG developed a pilot project, derived from the journey mapping exercise, to test the proposed changes in a controlled environment. The pilot aimed to transition from individual training sessions to a 1: Many training format, allowing multiple customers to receive high-quality training together as a group. Additionally, the pilot incorporated updates to existing templates, improved the process for setting expectations, and adopted a more targeted approach to addressing the specific needs of each customer.

Pilot Execution

The pilot was executed over a four-month period, from June to September 2024. ESG worked closely with the clients internal teams to ensure that the new process was implemented smoothly. The pilot included regular check-ins and adjustments based on feedback from both customers and employees.

Results

The pilot yielded impressive results:

- **Reduction in Onboarding Time:** The average onboarding time was reduced by 67%, from 90 days to just 30 days. This significant improvement not only increased customer satisfaction but also allowed the client to onboard more customers with the same resources.
- **Maintained Customer Satisfaction:** Despite the reduced onboarding time, customer satisfaction levels remained high. Customers appreciated the streamlined process and the quicker time-to-value.
- **Operational Efficiency:** The transition to 1: Many trainings increased overall team productivity by an estimated 60%.

Solution Strategy Phase 3: Scaling and Long-Term Improvement

Roadmap Development

Building on the success of the pilot, ESG developed a comprehensive roadmap for scaling the optimized onboarding process across the SMB segment. The roadmap outlined a phased approach to implementing the changes, with a focus on continuous improvement and regular measurement of key metrics such as Customer Time to Value (TTV), Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), and Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR).

After completing the first phase of the roadmap, which focused on developing, delivering, and iterating the onboarding pilot within 3 months, the long-term improvement plan extended over an additional 5 months. This provided the necessary runway to fully implement the changes and measure their impact across the organization.

The roadmap also included provisions for ongoing training and reinforcement to ensure that the new process was fully adopted and embedded into the company's culture. ESG emphasized the importance of maintaining a customer-centric approach, with regular feedback loops to continually refine and improve the onboarding experience.

Sustaining Success

ESG continued to support the client's onboarding, sales, training, and leadership teams through an extended engagement, providing executive consulting and monthly check-ins to review progress and address any challenges. This ongoing support ensured that the changes implemented during the pilot were not only sustained but also built upon to drive further improvements in customer retention and operational efficiency.

To support the successful implementation of these changes, ESG provided comprehensive change management guidance and resources. This included conducting a Risk Assessment to anticipate potential challenges and proactively mitigate them, collaborating to create a Sponsor Map to identify and engage key stakeholders, and developing a Communication Plan to ensure clear and consistent messaging throughout the organization. By using these tools, ESG helped ensure that employees were informed, engaged, and prepared for the transition, ultimately reducing resistance and accelerating the adoption of the new processes.

Conclusion:

The ESG engagement resulted in a transformative redesign of the client's onboarding process that resulted in efficiency improvements, capacity gains, all aimed at restoring the previously low 6.7% customer churn. By focusing on customer needs, simplifying the onboarding journey, and enhancing operational efficiency, the client saw significant improvements. Early results from the pilot project showed that the average onboarding time was reduced by 67%, dropping from 90 days to just 30 days. This accelerated Time-to-Value (TTV) allowed the client to onboard more customers with the same resources, leading to an estimated 60% increase in overall team productivity.

Using data-driven insights, process redesign, and effective execution, ESG helped a digital health management platform to pinpoint root causes of churn and unlock new opportunities for sustainable growth and profitability.

This case study underscores the importance of a customer-centric approach and continuous improvement in driving successful outcomes.